White House Rules Out A Spy-Probe Office

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By Lawrence Meyer
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The White House does not plan to single out one official or set up a special office to handle congressional inquiries on intelligence matters, a spokesman said yesterday.

Responding to questions based on news accounts that a single official would be appointed to coordinate White House responses to congressional requests, White House press secretary Ron Nessen said that these requests will be handled "in the normal manner."

Although Nessen said "there is not going to be an intelligence job" in the White House, it is expected that White House counsel Phillip W. Buchen's office will take the leading role in coordinating White House liaison with the various inquiries into Central Intelligence Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation activities.

The White House considered creating a special office outside the counsel's office to deal with the intelligence requests, Buchen said, "in lieu of our office taking it within the normal structure." That approach was rejected, Buchen said.

Rather, his office will handle legal and policy questions as they arise. Buchen has been without a permanent deputy since the departure early this month of Philip Areeda, who was counselor to the President. Roderick Hills, chairman of the Republic Corp. of Los Angeles and husband of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Carla Anderson Hills, is expected to be named Buchen's deputy shortly. He has been serving as a $138-a-day consultant to Buchen.

Buchen described the role of his office as "doing the preparatory work where the issues are likely to arise, anticipating them in advance." He said his office also will be holding discussions with the congressional committees, to see that their requests for information and documents are as specific or relevant as possible.

"They know," Buchen said, referring to the House and Senate committees, "they've got to zero in on major issues and not roam all over on a horrendous range of issues."

Buchen also went out of his way to voice confidence in CIA Director William E. Colby. The White House reportedly had considered, and rejected, placing an intelligence "czar" over Colby. Buchen said, "There is no question that Colby stays there and continues to do the good job that he does."

PHILIP W. BUCHEN

RODERICK HILLS

. . . expected to serve as CIA-probe liaison